

REMARKS

By the above actions, claims 9 & 11 have been amended. Additionally, two sheets of replacement drawings and a new copy of the previously submitted substitute specification are being submitted herewith. In view of these actions and the following remarks, reconsideration of this application is requested.

With regard to the objection to the drawings, the accompanying two sheets of replacement drawings correct Figs. 2 & 5 by changing the reference number 2 therein to the reference number 6. Therefore, the objection to the drawings should be withdrawn and such action is requested.

As for the objection to the specification, it is unclear as to what the Examiner is referring to as a “replacement copy”. Applicant has previously filed a copy of the PCT application, a substitute specification and a mark-up of the substitute specification. To make it clear to the Examiner which text is intended to be used, submitted herewith is a copy of the previously filed substitute specification which is intended to be used for examination purposes.

Claims 9-12 stand rejected under 35 USC § 102 based on the disclosure of the Hedgaard WIPO publication (which corresponds to US Patent 6,915,669). This rejection is inappropriate both as to these claims with and without the above amendments for the following reasons.

Both the method and apparatus of the present invention have/use grippers with inner and outer parts and that fix the pelt on the pelt board “substantially along the whole periphery of the pelt.” However, Hedegaard, as clearly shown in the sole figure, merely has widely spaced gripping elements 16 that contact only a very limited portion of the pelt on the pelt board, and to an extent that by no interpretation can be considered to fix the pelt substantially along the whole periphery of the pelt.. Furthermore, there is no disclosure of Hedegaard’s gripping elements having inner and out parts and the above amendments make it clear that the lower end area of the pelt is gripped between the inner and outer parts of the gripping elements. Thus, Hedegaard cannot render obvious, let alone anticipate the present invention.

Claims 13, 15 & 16 stand rejected under 35 USC § 103 based on the disclosure of the Hedgaard when viewed in combination with the Johanson patent. However, this rejection is

not understandable since Johanson is so different from Hedgaard as to make it infeasible for anyone of ordinary skill to combine their teachings, let alone so as to arrive at the present invention.

That is, Johanson is not designed for use with a pelt disposed over a pelt board, i.e., the pelt board is inside the pelt so as to be surrounded by it, but rather involves the stretching of a sheet type glove stock skin by pulling on opposite ends (“lengthwise stretch”) or opposite flanks (“crosswise stretch”). Such stretching of a sheet and the grippers used to do so have no relevance to the situation of the present invention and Hedegaard where the pelt surrounds a tubular pelt board and stretching is produced by relative movement between the pelt board and the gripping elements which are located at only one end of the pelt board. It is simply not understandable why one of ordinary skill in the art would even attempt to apply Johanson’s teachings to the entirely different type of stretching arrangement and pelt of Hedegaard, let alone how any combination that does not rely on the disclosure of the present application would result in the present invention in which inner and outer parts of the gripping elements fix the pelt on the pelt board “substantially along the whole periphery of the pelt.” Therefore, this rejection should also be withdrawn.

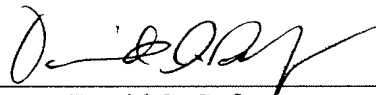
Lastly, claim 14 has been rejected under 35 USC § 103 based on the disclosure of the Hedgaard when viewed in combination with the Barnes patent. However, the skin stretcher of the Barnes patent is designed to be “inserted within the treated skin of an animal to stretch the same and to retain its shape during drying. Thus, in effect, Barnes’ skin stretcher takes the place of a pelt board and most certainly could not be used in combination with Hedegaard’s pelt board on the one hand, and on the other hand, being narrow bars (see, Figs. 4-7) like the grippers of Hedegaard, any applicability of the structure of Barnes stretcher to Hedegaard’s grippers 16 would, of necessity, result in the same limited contact between the grippers and the pelt and could not lead to an arrangement in which the gripping elements fix the pelt on the pelt board “substantially along the whole periphery of the pelt.” Therefore, withdrawal of this rejection is also in order and hereby requested.

The prior art cited, but not applied, by the Examiner has been taken into consideration in formulation of this response. However, since this art was not found to be sufficiently

relevant by the Examiner to apply against the claims as originally presented, no detailed comments thereon are believed to be warranted at this time.

Therefore, in the absence of new and more relevant prior art being discovered, this application should now be in condition for allowance and action to that effect is requested. However, while it is believed that this application should now be in condition for allowance, in the event that any issues should remain, or any new issues arise, after consideration of this response which could be addressed through discussions with the undersigned, then the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned by telephone for the purpose of resolving any such issue and thereby facilitating prompt approval of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Safran', is written over a horizontal line.

David S. Safran
Registration No. 27,997

Customer No. 25570

Roberts Mlotkowski Safran & Cole, P.C.
P.O. Box 10064
McLean, VA 22102

Telephone: (703) 584-3273